National Postsecondary Education Cooperative

NPEC Notes

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Welcome!

Welcome to *NPEC Notes,* the newsletter of the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative. We hope this publication, along with the electronic newsletter (*NPEC In Touch*), and the NPEC Web site (http://nces.ed.gov/npec) will keep you informed of recent activities within the Cooperative. *NPEC Notes* includes a statement from the Chair, a calendar of upcoming meetings and events, and highlights of some of the many NPEC activities. This issue includes a focus article on the NPEC Council Meeting and an article about recent activities of two Student Outcomes Working Groups, Sourcebook and Common Language.

Please feel free to address questions or offer suggestions to Communication Coordinator Hans L'Orange at hlorange@sheeo.org or Project Director Nancy Borkow at Nancy.Borkow@ed.gov.

NPEC 2000 Council Meeting

On November 28-30, 2000, the NPEC Council held its annual meeting in Washington D.C. at the Mayflower Hotel. The theme of the meeting was "Moving from Data to Information to Better Decisions." Over 100 attendees participated in the meeting. The Council meeting sessions opened with a welcome to new members and an orientation session that provided information on NPEC, its mission, and its structure. This year a mentoring program was initiated for the new members.

Wednesday's keynote address by Renee Lerche, Director of Workforce Development for Ford Motor Company, was "Impact of People Data on Business Strategy or How to Succeed in Business by Really Trying." She discussed both the benefits and challenges of using people data to affect an organization's business strategy. She explained how people data might not seem important to profitability until it's traced to customer, employee, and investor loyalty.

Working Group Spotlight

From its very beginning, NPEC has placed a high priority on enhancing the utility of student outcome information for policy development. During 1996, the Student Outcomes from a Policy Perspective Working Group developed a model for linking student outcomes to policy issues and criteria for evaluating an outcome's policy relevance. In 1997, the Steering Committee built on these efforts by establishing Working Groups to pilot test the model developed by the Policy Perspectives Working Group. This early work focused on outcomes in two domains — cognitive and intellectual development and preparation for employment — and included an analysis of tests that measure critical thinking, problem solving, and writing that is included in a widely distributed Sourcebook.

In 2000, the Steering Committee approved two new student outcomes projects: 1) extending the *Sourcebook (Definitions and Assessment Measures for Critical Thinking, Problem Solving and Writing)* to other outcome variables and 2) developing a Common Language. These distinct but related projects are profiled here.

Student Outcomes: Sourcebook

Julie Noble and Dawn Geronimo Terkla are the Co-Chairs of this Working Group, which is charged with extending the Sourcebook to additional student outcomes areas beyond writing, critical thinking and problem solving. The Working Group members were asked to consider additional im-

Comments from the Chair

By Michael McGuire, Georgetown University
2001 NPEC Chair

Dr. Michael McGuire

Getting Older, Getting Better

The November 2000 NPEC Council meeting marked the 5th anniversary of the Cooperative. As it leaves its infancy and enters its childhood years – walking, talking, and toilet-trained – NPEC as an organization is in the process of assessing its maturity and future direction. In 2000 the Strategic Planning Subcommittee of the Steering Committee commissioned an external review of the Cooperative, performed by Dr. David Leslie of the College of William & Mary. The findings of that review included both strengths and accomplishments of NPEC, and significant areas of needed improvement. At its February meeting, the Steering Committee considered the recommendations of the Strategic Planning Subcommittee for making NPEC a more effective and efficient player in the U.S. post-secondary education community. More information about these recommendations will be coming soon.

While it is still uncertain what specific actions will be taken, it is clear to me at least that changes are required for NPEC to achieve its full potential. We've grown up considerably since that first Council meeting late in 1995, but we have not hit our stride yet. As I noted in November, NPEC's greatest strengths are the energy, commitment, talent and diversity of its membership. The challenge now is to focus our resources on tasks, and in ways that will make more meaningful and visible contributions to our constituencies. With your continued support and creativity, I am confident that we will succeed. ∎

NPEC 2000 Council Meeting

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When people relationships are in place, companies should see increases in productivity and value.

Other speakers included the NCES Acting Commissioner Gary Phillips who spoke about NCES and NPEC activities. Maryland Representative Kumar Barve, whose address "Information Movement: A Legislative Perspective" focused on how to prioritize information for decision-makers, and encouraged the audience to know where and when to deliver information. The advice he gave to those trying to get the attention of the legislators included the importance of a personal relationship, the credibility given to those not driven by money, and simply being in the right place at the right time.

Richard Yanikoski, President of St. Xavier University spoke on "From Better Decisions to Better Data: A President's View" and suggested that decision-making should influence how data is gathered. He said that on the surface, the issues that face a university president daily would not seem to be helped by nationally collected data. However, it does help when analyzing the impact of a decision or when data provides an early warning.

All presentations of featured speakers were followed by panel discussions. Council members also attended concurrent sessions focusing on current NPEC projects including Data Ramifications of Competency-Based Initiatives, Student Outcomes: Common Language, Cost, Finance, and Productivity, Accessing Survey Resources, Student Transitions, Implications of Technology for Postsecondary Education Data Systems, Access: Setting New Directions, IPEDS Finance, and the Sourcebook.

The 2001 NPEC Chair, Michael McGuire, closed the Council meeting with remarks about NPEC's future directions. He reviewed NPEC's many accomplishments and reflected on the future changes that will maintain NPEC's strengths and address its weaknesses. Dr. McGuire raised questions ranging from who the intended audience should be, who sets the agendas, and what future projects and products should be. Council members offered suggestions for continuing improvement. ∎

Note to Council Members:
The Steering Committee voted to suspend the annual NPEC Council meetings while they review NPEC's future directions. There will be no Council Meeting in November 2001.

Working Group Spotlight

portant outcome variables such as: quantitative/computational skills, information acquisition skills, and workplace skills.

The Working Group met in Washington, DC on July 14, 2000. They discussed the assessment and accountability continuum and considered the different interests that exist along the continuum. Information needs for assessment differs based on the user's (faculty, educational leaders, the public, the business community, elected officials, or others) perspective and needs. Members of the Working Group emphasized the importance of acknowledging the continuum and indicated that NPEC's Sourcebook should be permanently aimed at the academic audience, but should be readable by a broader audience. They also suggested that perhaps an addendum could be prepared for the Sourcebook addressing the decision-making structure and how information needs about assessment are different for the various audiences.

The Working Group identified four areas to be included in an expanded Sourcebook:

- Quantitative/computational skills – reasoning, application, interpreting graphs, statistics
- Communications – listening, oral, interpersonal, technology/assisted, sending/receiving
- Interpersonal skills – teamwork, leadership, conflict management, delegation, negotiation, fellowship
- Information competency/literacy – reading, technology assisted search/ web/library analysis

They identified two additional areas – Moral/ethical reasoning/ethic/civic responsibility and Science reasoning, including environmental awareness – as desirable additions to the Sourcebook if resources and time permits.

The Working Group then identified a number of consultants who they believed could assist in the overall project. Elizabeth Jones, Assistant Professor of Advanced Education Studies at the College of Human Resources, University of West Virginia, agreed to serve as one of the consultants to the Working Group. Other consultants are in the process of being identified.

The Co-Chairs will be making a presentation about the Sourcebook at AIR this spring. The Working Group is scheduled to meet next on July 23-24, 2001, and will review initial drafts of the consultants' work in expanding the Sourcebook and focus on marketing strategies.

Student Outcomes: Common Language

Norval Wellsfry, Professor at Cosumnes River College, is the Chair of the Working Group that will oversee the Student Outcomes: Common Language project. At its January 2000 meeting, the NPEC Steering Committee established this new Working Group to explore a "common language" related to student outcomes. The Steering Committee asked the Working Group "to reconcile the meanings and relationships across multiple terms that are used to describe student outcomes and to develop definitions and concepts that support more effective communication and use of information about student outcomes."

The Working Group met for the first time on October 30, 2000 and addressed the following issues:

- The terminology that is currently used in relation to "student outcomes"
- The characteristics of student outcomes and a conceptual framework for describing student outcomes
- The issues raised in measuring, reporting and using student outcome data for decision making in different institutions, levels within postsecondary education, and policy-making and implementation contexts.

The Working Group is currently reviewing an interim report that will soon be available on the NPEC web site. They have commissioned Dary Erin, Director, Office of Student Assessment, James Madison University; Trudy Banta, Vice Chancellor, Planning and Institutional Improvement and Professor of Education, Indiana University, Purdue; and Norena Badway, Director, Community College Cooperative, University of California, Berkeley, to work on the project. These consultants will examine terminology related to student outcomes in the following areas:

- Terms used interchangeably with (or as a proxy for) student outcome (e.g., output, achievement, result, ability, attainment, competence, proficiency)
- Terms used in the academic outcome domain (e.g., communication skills, computational skills, higher order and intellectual development, content learning)
- Terms used in the occupational outcome domain (e.g., occupational preparation, workplace skills)
- Terms used in the developmental outcome domain (e.g., psychosocial development, attitudes, values and beliefs, civic development)
- Terms reflecting different use and time frame contexts (e.g., educational success, economic impacts, success in transitions, quality of life, productivity, employment, goals)
- Terms related to measuring outcomes (e.g., value added, learning gain, assessment, standards, benchmarks, indicators).

The Group's anticipated final deliverable will be a report recommending terminology and definitions related to student outcomes. A better understanding of basic terminology, concepts, and principles in the analysis and use of student outcome information will lead to more effective use of student outcomes information in policy development and decision making. ∎

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Hans Brisch Elected NPEC 2002 Chair

Hans Brisch, Chancellor of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education was named Chair-Elect by the NPEC Steering Committee. Hans will assume the Chair's duties at the January 2002 Steering Committee meeting.

Two Reports to be Published This Spring

Look for two new reports from NPEC in the next few months. *Paving the Way to Postsecondary Education: K-12 Intervention Programs for Underrepresented Youth*, a report written by consultant Patricia Gandara with Deborah Bial for the Access Working Group will be available soon. A report produced by Elizabeth Jones, Rick Voorhees, and Karen Paulson for the Working Group on Competency-Based Initiatives, *Defining and Assessing Learning: Exploring Competency-Based Initiatives,* was accepted by the Steering

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Committee at their February meeting. An earlier draft may be found on the Web Site (http://nces.ed.gov/npec/fieldreview.html).

Strategic Planning Group Recommends Next Phase

The Strategic Planning Subcommittee, chaired by Warren Fox, submitted their recommendations for NPEC's future directions to the Steering Committee at their February meeting. These recommendations were in response to the review of NPEC undertaken by consultant David Leslie. They include considering an Executive Director model, reviewing how to meet the needs of policy makers, data producers, and data consumers, and exploring more effective staff support options.

New Group to Review NPEC Future Directions

Chair Mike McGuire has charged a new group to investigate options and transition issues for NPEC's future directions. Greg Smith and Ed Blews will co-chair the group that will consider options in response to the proposed new directions mentioned above. Their recommendations will be presented to the Steering Committee at their July meeting. ∎

Calendar of Events

Date	Event
May 17-18	Access-Technology
May 30	Student Outcomes Common Language
July 10	Transition/Implementation Meeting
July 10-11	Steering Committee
July 23-24	Sourcebook
Sept. 20	Transition/Implementation Meeting
Sept. 20-21	Steering Committee

**Please check the Web site
for updates to the meeting calendar.**